[Vol. 1.] THE [No. 42.]

# WEEKLY VISITANT.

FOR OCTOBER 18.

"OURS ARE THE PLANS OF FAIR DELIGHTFUL PEACE,
"UNWARP'D BY PARTY RAGE, TO LIVE LIKE BROTHERS."

*SALEM*—SATURDAY EVENING, OCTOBER 25, 1806.

## ORIGINAL.

FOR THE WEEKLY VISITANT.

### SOCRATES AND HIS ATTENDANT SPIRIT.

SCENE.—A wild cliff, impending over the sea, and encircled in the back-ground by woods. Socrates is discovered in a contemplative posture on the summit. The moon is just rising as the Attendant Spirit appears.

ATTENDANT SPIRIT.

I have remarked with concern, that a cloud of melancholy has recently overshadowed your countenance, and manifested to my penetrating vision the deep workings of a troubled spirit. You have been accustomed to communicate your inmost emotions; why do you now imprudently affect concealment? Have I merited this disingenuous treatment? You know me your unceasing friend and approved companion. I abhor disguise, and most righteously disclaim the infernal policy, in which it originates.

SOCRATES.

These are times of duplicity, and we mortals must render our actions conformable. Singularity is not only offensive but dangerous. An ingenuous simpleton is exposed to the impostures of every unprincipled adventurer.

ATTENDANT SPIRIT.

These *are* times of duplicity; but you are not compelled to become a devil, because some of mankind have assumed that character; nor should you fear the imputation of singularity, when your motives are commendable, or your purposes sufficiently important to authorize a deviation. It is honorable, it is godlike, to deviate from the practice of the abandoned. The solitary fidelity of Abdiel commands admiration; while the rebellious multitude excite the most unqualified disapprobation. The ingenuous man is in reality exposed to deception. Your smooth-faced imposter too is sometimes over-reached, though perhaps less frequently; but the difference of their feelings—how incalculable is the difference! There lies the advantage. The bosom of the one expands with emotions of conscious rectitude; the other, sensible of the fraudulence of

his intention, experiences correspondent feelings—feelings of inward shame and remorse, which invariably accompany the meditation and commission of crimes.

SOCRATES.

If I have not misconceived your meaning, you esteem the difference of feeling a sufficient inducement, exclusive of other considerations, to make men embrace the most undisguised manners. If this be your conception, I will give you information, of which you seem to be criminally ignorant. This argument of *feeling* is extremely inconclusive. It might possibly have influenced people in the golden age, when damsels were uniformly virtuous, and their swains as uniformly sincere; when peace and innocence, sheephooks and shepherds' pipes, love and enjoyment, meadows and woodlands, were equally abundant; but in this degenerate age of iron, the dominion of feeling submits to the almighty predominance of self-interest, and self-aggrandizement. Your delicate perceptions, glowing sensibilities, and sympathetic emotions are perfectly obsolete—perfectly out of fashion.

ATTENDANT SPIRIT.

And this is the information, of which I am criminally ignorant! I should wish to be eternally ignorant of such abominable information. Does not a sense of right and wrong, of justice and injustice, operate on communities? Are not individuals influenced by the irresistible sensations of the heart; the thoughts, from which there is no escape?

SOCRATES.

The empire of candor and feeling is annihilated, that of interest and hypocrisy is erected on its ruins; this is the conclusion of the whole matter.

ATTENDANT SPIRIT.

I perceive your purpose; I have now fathomed your motives for advocating a cause which your heart utterly disclaimed. Praise of ingenuous simplicity is music to your ear; and this praise you desired to hear from *my* lips. Have I gratified you? But do not imagine I have been deceived. Though some of your assertions were too true, yet your unimpassioned manner completely betrayed you.

SOCRATES.

Oh, I attempted no imposition. Knowing your penetration and benevolence, I was fully assured you would discover and pardon the innocent deceit—for it was no other. My heart disowned the sentiments my lips pronounced; but how was I delighted with your unanswerable defence! My amiable Spirit, how can I recompense such unmerited condescension, such unchangeable ——

ATTENDANT SPIRIT.

No more of compliments—I despise them. But come, my Socrates, ingenuously say why you are thus dejected; and why, retired to this romantic solitude, you rather indulge imbittered recollections, than contemplate the majestic features of nature. The radiant tinge of twilight has imperceptibly faded. See the lovely moon emerging

from the gleamy wave, and as her beams diffuse over the scene a mellow etherial softness, heaven, earth and ocean wear a smile of inexpressible complacency. O who could choose but gaze!

SOCRATES.

The scene is inimitably grand, and worthy of its Great Contriver; but why, my endeared comforter, why do *you* inquire the cause of my sorrow? Have you not witnessed the injury my reputation has sustained? Though I have ever disregarded the prate of the great and little vulgar, I could never render my bosom insensible to the calumnies of an unfaithful friend. I had a *friend*, as I fondly believed; that friend professed to be every thing excellent, and I, foolishly crediting the profession, have been deluded; deluded by one apparently the truest of friends—that imbitters the reflection; I grieve for humanity.

ATTENDANT SPIRIT.

Accursed aspersion!—Yes, I indignantly witnessed the defamation. Could I have interposed, O how I would have abashed the infamous slanderer! The laws of the universe forbade, and I reluctantly submitted.

SOCRATES.

That a retired student, who is little versed in the unmeaning formalities of fashion, who endeavors to discountenance these imposing accompaniments of weak minds, but who nevertheless wishes to possess a character critically unexceptionable, should appear deficient in the ceremonials of complimentary nonsense, is nothing extraordinary or reprehensible; but that a person, arrived at maturity of years, professing to be an unalienable friend as well as an unimpeached worshipper of the gods, should communicate to domestics and to credulous neighbors such frivolous omissions and inadvertencies, with malicious exaggeration, is most ungenerous, vile, and vindictive. Immortal gods! what adequate punishment can be inflicted on these calumnious tongue-assassins! When night veils the world in obscurity, with what emotions do they recollect their venomous falsehoods; with what confidence supplicate the protecting powers? But, though they are children of Hell, may the merciful gods pardon their complicated iniquities.

ATTENDANT SPIRIT.

Socrates!—This subduing of your resentment—this noble resolution of forgiving—consummates your character. But think not the unfaithful one shall escape unpunished. A malignant Demon is commissioned to attend the midnight pillow of such muderers. Embathed in venom, he bestrides the breast, and as he infuses unimaginable horror, enjoys with a devilish grin-smile, the intense agonies;—then infixing his hellish fangs ——

SOCRATES.

Oh no more. May the gods mitigate the punishment of wickedness, though my undeserved anguish remains unmitigated.

ATTENDANT SPIRIT.

Cease complaint. Listen—behold—it is the reward of injured innocence.

[A visionary scene ensues. A low murmur of music seems to steal over the ocean from the remotest verge of the horizon; but as it gradually approaches, rushes upon the soul in a full burst of harmony. Spirits are discovered treading the heaving waves below; some intermingling form mazy dances in the air, while others are discerned recumbent on a lunar rainbow, whose blended hues, girdling the volumes of rising mist, display a sight of surpassing beauty. Socrates, overpowered, hears and sees in mute enchantment. Having for considerable time performed their fantastic vagaries, they all slowly recede over ocean, till the faint melody trembles on the breeze, and is heard no more.]

SOCRATES.

'Tis Heaven!—'Tis mingled ecstasy!—Return, return, illusive vision!—

ATTENDANT SPIRIT.

Young man, this is a mere prelude to future enjoyment. Your soul, as you advance in years, will be dilated by the pure invigorating streams of philosophy; and, should you experience ungrateful aspersion, the reflection of your innocence, like this etherial music, will produce a thrill of unmingled joy.

A VISIONARY.

## AN ENQUIRY INTO THE CONSISTENCY OF OATHS WITH *REASON AND CHRISTIANITY.*

BY DR. RUSH.

In discussing this question, I shall first mention the objections to oaths, which are founded in reason; and, secondly, the objections to them which are derived from the precepts and spirit of the christian religion

I. Oaths produce an idea in the minds of men, that there are two kinds or degrees of truth? the one intended for common, and the other for solemn occasions. Now, this idea is directly calculated to beget a want of reverence for the *inferior* kind of truth; hence men are led to trifle with it in the common affairs of human life. I grant that some men will tell the truth, when urged to it by the solemn formalities of an oath, who would not otherwise do it: But this proves the great mischief of oaths in society; for as men are called upon to speak the truth 999 *times* in common life, to *once* they are called upon to *swear* to it, we have exactly 999 falsehoods to *one* truth told by them. How extensive, then, must be the mischief of this great disproportion between truth and falsehood, in all the affairs of human life! It is wrong to do any thing that shall create an idea of two kinds of truth. There is a scale of falsehoods; but truth has no degrees or subdivisions. Like its divine author, it is an eternal unchangeable UNIT.

II. The practice of swearing according to human laws, appears to be the cause of all profane swearing which is so universal among all ranks of people in common conversation; for if there are two modes of speaking the truth, it is natural for men to prefer that mode which the laws of our country have entitled to the first degree of credibility; hence men swear, when they wish to be believed, in common conversation.

III. Oaths have been multiplied upon so many trifling occasions, that they have ceased, in a great degree, to operate with any force upon the most solemn occasions: hence the universal prevalence of *perjury* in courts, armies and custom-houses, all over the world. This fact is so notorious in Jamaica, that a law has lately been passed in that island, which requires a bond of 200 pounds, instead of an oath, from every captain that enters his vessel in the custom-house, as a security for his veracity in the manifest of his cargo, and for the amount of his duties to the goverment.

Reason and scripture (when perfectly understood) are never *contrary* to each other; and revelation from God can never give a sanction to that which is so evidently absurd, and unfriendly to the interests of human society. Let us proceed then to examine the Bible, and here we shall find, that oaths are as contrary to the precepts and spirit of christianity as they are to sound reason.

Before I mention either the precepts or the spirit of the gospel, which militate against oaths, I shall mention a few of the cases of swearing which I find upon record in the New Testament. I shall first mention the precedents in favour of this practice, and then the precepts and precedents against it.

The *first* precedent I shall produce, is taken from the example of the devil, who addresses our Saviour in an oath, in Mark v. 7. 'What have I to do with thee, Jesus, thou son of the most high God? I adjure thee *by God* that thou torment me not.'

A *second* precedent is taken from the example of the high priest, who addresses our Saviour in an oath in Matthew, xxvi. 63. 'I adjure thee,' says he, just before he consents to his death, 'by the *living God*, that thou tell us whether thou be the Christ the son of God.' It has been said that there was no impropriety in this mode of expression, otherwise our Saviour would have rebuked it: but let it be remembered, that he stood before the tribunal of a high-priest, as a *prisoner*, and not as a *teacher;* and hence we find he submits in *silence* to all the prophane insults that were offered him. In this silent submission to insult, he moreover fulfiled an ancient prophesy 'he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter and as a sheep before his shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth.' Isaiah LIII. 7.

Peter furnishes a *third* instance of swearing. 'And again he *denied*' (says Matthew, chap. XXVI. 72.) 'with an *oath*, I know not the man.' It would seem from this account, that a bare *affirmation* was so characteristic of a disciple of Jesus Christ, that Peter could not use a more direct method to convince the maid, who charged him with being a follower of Jesus of Nazareth, that he was *not* a *christian*, than by having recourse to the Jewish and pagan practice of taking an oath.

Herod furnishes a *fourth* instance of swearing, in Matthew XIV. 7, when he promised to give the daughter of Herodias whatever she should ask of him: she asked for John the babtist's head in a charger: the king repented of his hasty promise; 'nevertheless for the oath's sake, and them which sat with him at meat, he commanded it to be given her.' Here it is evident he would have violated a common promise. But if common promises are not held sacred, and binding, there is an end of a great portion of truth in society, and of all the order and happiness which arise from it. To secure constant and universal truth men should swear *always* or *not at all.*

A *fifth* precedent for swearing we find in the XIX of Acts and 13th verse. 'Then certain of the vagabond Jews, exorcists, took upon them to call over them which had evil spirits, the name of the Lord Jesus, saying, *we adjure thee*, by Jesus whom Paul preacheth. And the man in whom the evil spirit was, leaped on them, and overcame them so that they fled out of the house naked and wounded.'

The *last* precedent for swearing that I shall mention, is the one related in Acts XXIII. 21st. It contains an account of forty men who bound themselves, by *an oath*, not to eat or drink until they had killed St. Paul. It would seem that this banditti knew each other perfectly, and that they would not act together under the form of a common obligation. The occasion indeed, seems to require an oath. It was an association to commit murder. I am disposed to suspect that oaths were introduced originally to compel men to do things that were contrary to justice, or to their consciences.

In mentioning the precepts and precedents that are to be found in the new testament against swearing, the following striking passage, taken from Matthew v. verses 34, 35, 36, 37, should alone determine the question. 'Swear not at all, neither by heaven for it is God's throne; nor by the earth for it is his footstool; nor by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the great king. Neither shalt thou swear by thy head, because thou canst not make one hair white or black. But let your communication be yea, yea; nay, nay; for whatsoever is more than these, cometh of evil.

The words of the apostle James, are equally pointed against swearing, chap. v. 12. 'But above all things my brethren, swear not, neither by heaven, neither by the earth, neither by any other oath ; but let your yea, be yea, and your nay, nay ; lest ye fall into condemnation.

I know, these passages are said to be levelled only against profane swearing in common conversation, but this will appear improbable when we reflect, that our Saviour's words were addressed exclusively to his disciples, and that the epistle of St. James, from whence the prohibition of swearing is taken, is directed to a number of pious converts to christianity, none of whom, any more than the disciples of our Lord, could be suspected of profane swearing in common conversation. Both passages equally condemn oaths of every kind, and demonstrate their contrariety to the gospel dispensation.

There is a peculiar meaning in the reason which is given for the prohibition of swearing in the precept, of our Saviour, viz. that any thing more than a bare affirmation, *cometh of evil.* Yes, it came originally from the universal prevalance of falsehood in society ; but the christian religion, by opening new sources of moral and religious obligation, and by discovering more fully the beauty and rewards of truth and deformity, and future punishment of falsehood, has rendered the obligation of oaths wholly unnecessary. They comported with the feeble discoveries of the Jewish, and the numerous corruptions of the pagan religions ; but they are unnecessary under that full and clear manifestation of the divine will which is contained in the gospel. Cæsar's wife should not be suspected.—With how much more propriety should this be said of the veracity of a christian, than of the chastity of the wife of a heathen emperor. Every time a christian swears, he exposes the purity and truth of his religion to suspicion. 'As for you, Petrarch, your word is sufficient,' said the cardinal Colonna, in an enquiry into the cause of a riot that had happened in his family, while that celebrated poet was a member of it ; and in which he exacted an oath from every other member of his family, not excepting his own brother, the bishop of Luna. The same address should be made to every christian, when he is called upon to declare the truth. 'You believe in a future state of rewards and punishment—you profess to be the follower of that Being who has inculcated a regard for truth, under the awful consideration of his omniscience, and who has emphatically styled himself the TRUTH.' *Your word, therefore, is sufficient.*

A nobleman is premitted by the laws of England, to declare the truth upon his *honour.* The profession of christianity is declared in scripture to be an high calling, and christians are said to be *priests* and *kings.* Strange! that persons of such high rank, should be treated with less respect than English noblemen ; and still more strange ; that persons possessing these august titles, should betray their illustrious birth and dignity, by conforming to a practice which tends so much to invalidate the truth and excellency of their religion.

It is very remarkable, that in all the accounts we have of the intercourse of our Saviour with his disciples, and of their subsequent intercourse with each other, there is no mention made of a single oath being taken by either of them.

Perhaps there never was an event in which the highest degrees of evidence were more necessary, than they were to establish the truth of the resurrection of our Saviour, as on the truth of this miracle depended the credibility of the christian religion. But in the establishment of the truth of this great event, no oath is taken, or required. The witnesses of it simply relate what they saw, and are believed by all the disciples except one, who still remembered too well the prohibition of his master, 'swear not at all,' to ask for an oath to remove his unbelief.

It is worthy of notice likewise, that no preposterous oath of office is required of the disciples when they assume the apostolic character, and are sent forth to preach the gospel to all nations. How unlike the spirit of the gospel are those human constitutions and laws, which require oaths of fidelity, every year ! and which appear to be founded in the absurd idea that men are at all times the guardians of their own virtue.

There can be no doubt of christians having uniformly refused to take an

oath in the first age of the church : nor did they conform to this pagan custom, till after christianity was corrupted by a mixture with many other parts of the pagan and Jewish religion.

There are two arguments in favour of oaths which are derived from the new testament, and which remain to be refuted.—1st. St. Paul uses several expressions in his epistles which amount to oaths, and even declares 'an oath to be the end of strife.' It was the character of St. Paul, that he became all things to all men. He circumcised as well as baptized Jews, and he proves the truth of revelation by a quotation from a heathen poet. Oaths were a part of the Jewish and pagan institutions—and, like several other ceremonies, for some time, continued to retain a strong hold of the prejudices of the new converts to christianity. But the above words of the Apostle, which have been urged in favor of swearing, are by no means intended to apply to common life. They have a retrospect to the promise made to Abraham of the coming of the Messiah, and were designed to shew the certainty of that event in a language which was accommodated to the idea of the Jewish nation.

2d. It has been said, that the great Jehovah frequently swears, both in the old and new testament, and that the angel who is to sound the last trumpet will 'swear that time shall be no more.' Every expression of this kind should be considered as an accommodation to Jewish and pagan customs, in order to render the truths of revelation more intelligible and acceptable. The Supreme Being, for the same reasons, often assumes to himself the violent passions, and even the features and senses of men ; and yet who can suppose it proper to ascribe either of them to a Being, one of whose perfections consists in his existing as a pure unchangeable spirit.

If oaths are contrary to reason, and have a pernicious influence upon morals and the order of society ; and above all, if they are contrary to the precepts and spirit of the gospel ; it becomes legislators and ministers of the gospel to consider how far they are responsible for all the falsehood, profane swearing and perjury that exist in society. It is in the power of legislators to abolish oaths, by expunging them from our laws ; and it is in the power of ministers of the gospel, by their influence and example to render truth so simple and obligatory, that human governments shall be ashamed to ask any other mode of declaring it, from Christians, than by a bare affirmation.

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## EXTRACT.

The female mind is naturally credulous, affectionate, and in its attachment ardent. If in her peculiar situation, her assiduities must be deemed in any degree culpable, let us remember that this is but a frail vessel of refined clay. When the awful record of her errors is enrolled, may that sigh which has breathed for the misery of a fellow mortal waft away the scroll, and tears which flowed for the calamities of others, float the memorial down the stream of oblivion !

On the errors of women let us look with the allowance and humanity of men. Enchanting woman ! thou balm of life ! soother of sorrow ! solace of the soul ! How dost thou lessen the load of human misery, and lead the wretched into the valley of delight ! Without thee how heavily would men drag through a dreary world ! but if the white hand of a fascinating female be twined round his arm, how joyous, how lightly doth he trip along the path.

That warm and tender friend, who in the most trying situations retains her enthusiastic fondness, and in every change of fortune, preserves unabated love, ought to be embraced as the first benison of heaven, the completion of earthly happiness. Let man draw such a prize in the Lottory of Life, and glide down the stream of existence with such a partner, neither the cold averted eye of a summer friend, nor the frowns of an adverse fortune, should produce a pang, nor excite a murmur.

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A late London paper mentions, that such is the rage for psalmody, that a man discovered under a bridge a few nights ago, said he was only *catching a little cold*, that he might the better sing *bass* the ensuing Sunday.

# POETRY.

FOR THE VISITANT.

## FRIENDSHIP.

*Addressed to Miss **** ******.*

Justice and Truth, to friendship and desert,
Awake these efforts of a tender heart,
Not to inflame thy passions or depress,
Eager alone to raise thy happiness.

Whether misfortunes or the ills of fate
Arise to wound thee, or thy joy abate,
'Tis mine, (at least may Heaven grant me this),
Either to soothe thy woes, or taste thy bliss;
Resolv'd with THEE thro' varied life to roam,
Sure of thy pray'rs abroad, thy smiles at HOME.

Oct. 1806. EDWIN.

## EXTRACT

From "*Love and Satire*" a small volume of poetical correspondence, between a young Lady and Gentleman, lately published in London.

*To Eliza, with a Dove.*

Accept, dear maid, the most delightful bird, [bound.
That ever Venus to her chariot
By Love adopted and by Peace preferr'd,
For meekness valued, and for faith renown'd.
A Bird, in which such rare perfections meet,
Alone is worthy to be counted thine:
His beauty, fair one, is like your's complete,
And his fidelity resembles mine.

JULIUS.

*To Julius, with a Goose.*

Swain, I accept your all accomplish'd Dove, [moan,
With rapture listen to his plaintive
And vow with constancy the bird to love, [own.
Whose beauty thus *reminds me of my*

I canot prove my gratiiude too soon,
For such a mark of tenderness conferr'd;
So song for song be thine, and boon for boon, [for bird.
Kindness for kindness, swain, & bird

Lo, the best fowl that Lincoln can produce, [group;
My choice has singled from a *tuneful*
Accept, *sweet Bard*, from me, as *great a Goose*, [coop.
As e'er was fatten'd in a poult'rer's

Your verse the merit of the Dove displays; [few;
The compliments I pay my bird are
Yet 'tis, methinks, no niggard share of praise,
To say how strongly he resembles *you*.

ELIZA.

## THANKSGIVING.

Thursday, the 27th of November next, is appointed by his Excellency the Governor to be observed as a day of Public Thanksgiving throughout the State of Massachusetts.

## MARRIAGES.

In this town, Rev. Brown Emerson, to Miss Mary Hopkins, daughter of the Rev. Daniel Hopkins. Mr. Abner Burbank, to Miss Sally Bancroft.—Mr. Jeremiah M. Chute, to Miss Betsey Gavet.

At Danvers, Mr. Benjamin Read, of this town, to Miss Seba Willington.

At Boston, Mr. Aaron Richardson, to Miss Nancy Low. Mr. Eldad Brown, to Miss Hannah Gooch.

*SALEM, (Mass.)*

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